

P 080653Z JUN 89
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3927
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
CJTTFME
GULFWAR COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 03092

1E. O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PARM PINR IR UR
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SOVIET ARMS SALES TO IRAN

REF: STATE 176500

11. (S - ENTIRE TEXT)

12. SUMMARY. UAE GOVERNMENT AGREES THAT POSSIBLE SOVIET ARMS SALE TO IRAN WOULD BE UNHELPFUL, BUT THEY ARE DUBIOUS THAT THEY CAN HAVE MUCH WEIGHT IN PREVENTING IT. MOREOVER, THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT DRAWING IRANIAN ENMITY. LINGERING EFFECTS OF U.S.-IRAN ARMS SALE SCANDAL AFFECT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO RAISE ISSUE WITH SOVIETS. END SUMMARY.

13. IN CONJUNCTION WITH BRIEFINGS ON IRAN BY INR/CENTCOM TEAM, AMBASSADOR MADE POINTS IN REFTEL, MODIFIED TO ACCOUNT FOR PROBABLE POSTPONEMENT OF RAFSANJANI VISIT TO MOSCOW UNTIL AFTER 40-DAY MOURNING PERIOD FOR KHOMEINI. IN TALKS WITH PRESIDENTIAL COURT CHAMBERLAIN SHEIKH SUROUR AND TOP FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL IN COUNTRY, AMBASSADOR PRESSED VIEW THAT KHOMEINI'S DEATH MAKES ARMS SALES BY SOVIETS OR ANYONE ELSE PARTICULARLY DESTABILIZING. AT TIME OF INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLE, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO TRY TO FOCUS IRANIAN ENERGIES ON ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION AND NOT TO ENCOURAGE FACTIONS WHICH MAY SEEK WEAPONS WITH IDEA OF EVENTUALLY RESUMING WAR WITH IRAQ AND ATTACKS ON SHIPPING.

14. SHEIKH SUROUR LISTENED PATIENTLY BUT WAS CLEARLY NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT RAISING THIS ISSUE WITH THE SOVIETS. HE TOOK THE LINE THAT ANY SOVIET ARMS IRAN COULD NOW AFFORD WERE UNLIKELY TO BE IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES TO RECTIFY CURRENT IMBALANCE FAVORABLE TO IRAQ. THUS IT WOULD NOT LEAD TO A RESUMPTION OF THE WAR. AS FOR LONG-TERM SOVIET INFLUENCE, HE SAID, IRANIANS WILL NOT BE SUSCEPTIBLE. HE CLAIMED THAT IRANIANS ARE BASICALLY PRO-WESTERN AND THAT THEIR ECONOMIC INTERESTS ALSO TIE THEM TO THE WEST. SOVIETS, HE THOUGHT, WERE ONLY DOING WHAT GREAT POWERS WILL ALWAYS DO --SERVING THEIR INTERESTS. IN THIS CASE, HE THOUGHT, IT WOULD BE ONLY OF SHORT-TERM SIGNIFICANCE. IF, HE CHALLENGED, THE U.S. ENJOYED GOOD RELATIONS WITH IRAN, AS THE SOVIET UNION TEMPORARILY DOES, WOULD IT NOT SELL ARMS TO THEM?

15. WE PRESSED IDEA THAT ARMS SALES COULD INDEED BE VERY DESTABILIZING DUE TO CURRENT POLITICAL TURMOIL. THE SALE OF ARMS BY ANY SOURCE --SOVIET UNION, CHINA, WESTERN EUROPE STATES, OR FOR THAT MATTER THE U.S.-- WOULD SERVE TO ENCOURAGE THE ELEMENTS THAT SEEK TO EXPAND THE REVOLUTION AND REARM TO RESUME WAR WITH IRAQ. RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO FOCUS IRANIAN ENERGIES ON ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION.

16. DURING OUR CALL ON YACOB AL-KINDI AT MFA WE GOT A MORE RESERVED RESPONSE. AL-KINDI AGREED THAT WE NEEDED TO BE VERY CAUTIOUS BUT THOUGHT IT TOO EARLY TO REACH ANY CONCLUSION ABOUT POLICIES TOWARD IRAN. WE SHOULD WATCH TO SEE HOW MATTERS DEVELOP. HE ACCEPTED A NON-PAPER SUMMARIZING AMBASSADOR'S DEMARCHE AND AGREED TO BRIEF FOREIGN MINISTER RASHID ABDULLA AND UNDERSECRETARY HAMDAN

BIN ZAYED UPON THEIR RETURNS FROM FOREIGN TRAVEL.

17. COMMENT: THE LEGACY OF THE U.S.-IRAN ARMS SCANDAL STILL BURDENS OUR DIALOGUE WITH SHEIKH SUROUR ON THIS ISSUE. HE HAD BEEN PERSONALLY ACTIVE IN PRESSING THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA TO COOPERATE WITH OPERATION STAUNCH. IN THE WAKE OF IRANGATE REVELATIONS HE FELT POLITICALLY EMBARRASSED AND EXPOSED AS AN UNWITTING TOOL OF USG DECEPTION. SUROUR HAS NO DOUBT THAT IF THE SOVIET UNION IS PERSUADED NOT TO SELL ARMS TO IRAN, IT WILL TELL THE IRANIANS IT CANNOT DO SO BECAUSE OF U.S. AND ARAB PROTESTS. MOREOVER, HE VIEWS IRANIAN HEGEMONY OVER THE GULF AS A NATURAL STATE OF AFFAIRS. IN THE LONG TERM, HE BELIEVES THAT IRAN WILL RETURN TO BOTH SANITY AND STRENGTH AND WILL THEN PLAY A STABILIZING ROLE. IN SHORT, IRAN WILL HELP DEFEND THE AREA FROM THE SOVIETS. IN THE SHORT-TERM, HE BELIEVES USG HAS SHOWN IT WILL HELP DEFEND THE GULF AGAINST REVOLUTIONARY IRAN. THAT BEING THE CASE, HE APPEARS TO BELIEVE, WHY SHOULD THE U.A.E. RUN MORE THAN NECESSARY RISKS WITH IRAN? FOR NOW, AT LEAST, HE PUTS A U.A.E. DEMARCHE TO THE SOVIETS IN THE CATEGORY OF UNNECESSARY RISKS.

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